

Green Garden News

January Tips

Flowers

- Refrigerated bulbs such as tulip, daffodil and hyacinth should be planted in prepared beds.
- Start seeds of warm season flowers late this month in order to have transplants in March.
- There's still time to transplant some cool season annuals such as carnation, foxglove, pansies, petunias and snapdragons.
- Re-fertilize cool season flowerbeds, using a liquid or dry form of fertilizer. Be careful not to apply excessive amounts and keep granules away from the base of stems.
- Finish dividing crowded perennials. Don't wait until spring for this job.
- Plant bare root roses immediately after they are purchased.

Trees and Shrubs

- Plant trees and shrubs. This is an ideal time of year for transplanting larger specimens.
- Plant bare root plants such as deciduous ornamental shrubs and trees.
- Prune dormant shade trees, if needed.
- Stick hardwood cuttings of fig, grape, honeysuckle, Althea, Ca-

talpa, Forsythia and Wisteria.

Fruits and Nuts

- Apply dormant oil spray to peach, plum, nectarine and other deciduous fruit trees. This practice is necessary when growing the stone fruits in locations along the Gulf Coast. Note: This applies to the flowering peaches and cherries since they are susceptible to the same pests as their fruiting cousins.
- Plant bare root deciduous fruit trees.
- Prune dormant fruit trees if needed.

Vegetable Garden

- Start seeds of warm season vegetables late this month in order to have transplants in March.
- Lime (if needed), and begin preparing vegetable gardens for the spring planting.
- Cool season vegetables that can still be planted in the garden are: beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, Chinese cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, leek, mustard, bunching onions, parsley, English peas, Irish potatoes, radishes, and turnips.

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The use of trade names is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product names.

Cold-Hardy Citrus for North Florida

Prior to the 1980's it was not unusual to see mature specimens of "cold-hardy" citrus in north Florida. Three major freezes in the 1990's have eliminated most of the citrus north of 30.5 north latitude. Nevertheless, cold-hardy citrus are being sold with regularity in north Florida. Homeowners should consider growing only a few of the many available citrus types.

Of the three types of sweet citrus (mandarins, oranges and grapefruits) only mandarins have sufficient cold hardiness. Satsuma (*Citrus reticulata*) is the most popular mandarin in north Florida with cold-hardiness down to about 20°F, although fruit damage can occur at 25°F. It is self-fruitful and fruit ripen in October. Other cultivars such as Ponkan (mandarin), Clementine, Dancy and Robinson (tangerines), Lee, Page and Osceola (citrus hybrids) or Minneola, Nova and Orlando (Tangelos) can tolerate minimum temperatures of about 23-27°F before tree damage will occur, and are best-adapted to areas south of Ocala. Another disadvantage of these cultivars, compared to Satsuma, is that fruit generally ripen during the winter and can be frozen at temperatures of 25-28°F. Sweet oranges and grapefruit are even less tolerant of cold, and should not be grown much further north than Orlando.

Kumquats are the only acid type of citrus that are sufficiently cold-hardy for Tallahassee; lemons and limes will not tolerate our winters. Meyer lemon, a relatively cold-hardy lemon hybrid will tolerate temperatures down to about 26°F. Meiwa, Nagami or Marumi kumquats (*Fortunella x crassifolia*), or the Changshou kumquat (*Fortunella x obovata*) will typically survive down to 20°F.

Of the passive methods to minimize cold damage,

proper site selection is most critical. Trees should be planted on the south side of homes or other structures, or windbreaks must be provided to minimize exposure to north or northwest winds. Also, citrus grown north of Ocala should be grafted on trifoliolate orange (*Poncirus trifoliata*) rootstocks which confers a greater degree of cold hardiness to the scions than other rootstocks.

Cold damage can be minimized by following some annual cultural practices. Do not fertilize after July; a late application of fertilizer can stimulate a new flush of growth in the fall that is especially susceptible to damage. Also, each December the trunks of young trees should be insulated with a commercial tree wrap or mounded with soil at least to a height of 1-2 feet (young trees are more sensitive to cold than old trees). This protects the trunk so that even if the branches freeze back, the tree will be able to re-sprout from dormant buds on the trunk. Remove the wrap or mounded soil each spring. When temperatures below 25°F are predicted, you may want to provide additional protection. A day prior to the freeze, thoroughly wet the soil around your trees. Wet soils retain more heat than dry soil and thereby provide a degree or two of protection. A method often used by people with only a few small trees is to place a portable shelter over young trees just prior to the cold weather. Placing an incandescent light bulb in the shelter will prevent winter damage under the worst weather conditions. The shelter should be removed during the late morning when temperatures moderate.

More information is available at the UF/IFAS edis website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG074>

-Peter C. Andersen and Gary W. Knox, Professors, North Florida Research and Education Center

New UF/IFAS Publications

Birdfeeder: What to Consider When Selecting available online at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW192>

The Nine-banded Armadillo publication available online at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW082>

Organic Lawn Care available online at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP140>

Not online? Contact your local Extension Office for a copy.

Exotic Beetle in Scented Pine Cones

National Recall

Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Charles H. Bronson is urging consumers who have purchased potpourri that includes scented pine cones **made in India** at ANY location in Florida to return them to the point of purchase. The United States Department of Agriculture initially issued a recall of the pine cones sold in Target Stores after an infestation of wood-boring beetles was found in the product, which is part of a potpourri arrangement. However, Department inspectors have now discovered the pest in a Walmart store in Charlotte County and they have expanded their search to any establishment that sells scented pine cone potpourri products, including supermarkets.

Live adults and larvae of *Chlorophorus strobilicola* (Cerambycidae) have also been found in Target Stores in Lake Mary, Largo, Tampa, Jacksonville and Coral Springs. While the USDA recall currently only impacts Target Stores, in an abundance of caution, Department inspectors began looking at other retail outlets. That's when they discovered the beetle at a Walmart Store in Murdock, Florida in the "Candle-Lite Potpourri" brand product. The beetle is another form of long-horned beetles a group which includes the Asian long horned beetle. Consumers who have purchased scented pine cones should return them to the store. If they have already opened the package, they are urged to **double bag the item** and return it to the store or double bag the product, tie it securely and dispose of it in the trash.

Scientists are still trying to determine whether this species of beetle would impact the types of pine trees grown in Florida and elsewhere around the Southeast, but they have not ruled out the possibility. Exotic pests are sometimes able to adapt to a new host when the natural host is no longer present.

The impact of the larval damage to pine cones is reduced seed production, which would be a serious problem in the U.S. if the beetle could successfully attack native pines. Major forest industries depend on reliable pine seed sources in refor-

estation programs. The scented pine cones originated in India where the *Chlorophorus strobilicola* is found. The beetles have also been found in North Carolina, Massachusetts and New Jersey. Target stores, which number 79 in Florida, have put a stop sale on this item and have agreed to incinerate, under USDA supervision, remaining inventory and returned material. While USDA has not expanded the recall beyond the Target Stores, Bronson says the discovery of the beetle in a Walmart is clear indication the product has been shipped to other retailers.

USDA records indicate that shipments of this product have been crossing into Canadian border ports since April 2003. Cooperation between U.S. Customs and Border Protection has been requested. Department inspectors are reporting that this material is being removed from the shelves and when items are scanned at check out counters, they come up on the registers as "hold - do not sell." For more information contact the toll-free helpline at (888) 397-1517.



Adult *Cerambycidae chlorophorus*
(less than 10 millimeters in length)

—Thomas R. Fasulo, Extension Entomologist, University of Florida

Upcoming Events

Gulf Coast Gardening From The Ground UP! Spring 2004 Series

The Santa Rosa County UF/IFAS Extension Office and the Santa Rosa County Master Gardeners Association will be presenting the **Spring 2004 Series** of their **Gulf Coast Gardening from the Ground UP! Program**, beginning Saturday, January 24th. All sessions in this series will be held in the meeting room of the Navarre Library on James M. Harvell Road. Registration for each session will open at 9AM, on the day of the session, in the lobby of the Navarre Library. Each session is expected to run from 10AM to 12:30PM, with a short break during the presentation, and an additional half hour question and answer period at the end. The capacity of the meeting room is 60, but there are only forty chairs available for this room. Visit or call the Navarre Library at 936-6120 for additional information. There is no charge for attending these classes.

- January 24: **"The Dirt On Soils"** by Theresa Friday, the UF/IFAS Santa Rosa County Extension Horticultural Agent. Bring your soil and water samples for testing! Directions for collecting the samples are available at the Navarre Library. The results of the tests will be available during the Q & A period.

- January 31: **"Planting"** by Theresa Friday and **"Pruning"** by Frank Larson, Santa Rosa County Master Gardeners Association (SRCMGA)
- February 14: **"Vegetable Gardening"** by Jim Tolar, SRCMGA
- February 28: **"Gulf Coast Lawns"** by Theresa Friday
- March 13: **"Annuals, Perennials, Bulbs and Roses for the Gulf Coast"** by Sally Menk, SRCMGA
- March 27: **"Weed Identification"** by Deila Hiebert, SRCMGA. Bring a bouquet of your weeds for identification during Q&A!

Extension programs are open to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, age, disability, religion or national origin.

For persons with disabilities requiring special accommodations, please contact the SRC Extension Office at least 5 working days prior to the program so that proper consideration may be given to the request.
(850) 623-3868

Recycle Christmas Trees

Santa Rosa County Recycle Department will again make available drop-off sites for old Christmas trees. Please make sure all bags, ornaments, lights, decorations and stands are removed from trees.

These locations will be:

- Tiger Point Recreational Facility
Hwy. 98, just east of Lowe's on Hwy 98
- Navarre Recreation Facility
East end of High School Rd, Navarre



- Clean Community Office
405 Park Ave., Milton
- Recycle Drop Facility at Pace Water System
Woodbine Road, Pace
- Jay Transfer Station
Hwy. 89, Jay

Please put only old Christmas trees at these sites; tree limbs and yard debris will be considered illegal dumping. These sites will be available through January 25, 2004.

Questions and Answers

Q: I've moved all of my tender potted plants in the garage to keep them from freezing. They have been stored for a couple of weeks and are beginning to look bad. How long can they tolerate conditions in my garage, and is there anything that I can do to keep them healthy?

A: It is important to protect your tender patio plants during the winter. Though protected from freezing, they will suffer to some degree during storage because of limited light and the danger of drying out, unless watered.

If practical, move them outdoors during warm periods, but don't expose them to nights below 45°F. When outside, irrigate them thoroughly if needed and allow the excess water to drain from the pots before moving them back indoors.

Though they will look rough by spring, most will recover quickly when they can be safely moved back outside.

Q: I've already had some of my perennials killed back by frosts. When can I prune off the ugly dead branches?

A: There is always that tendency to want to repair cold damaged plants by pruning them as soon as the damage is noticed. Eventually some pruning will be required, but delay any major pruning of plants even though they already are showing signs of cold injury.

There are a couple of reasons for delaying the pruning of frost damaged plants. First, it is impossible at this time to know how much of the plant was actually damaged. Tender, succulent plants like many of our tropicals and subtropicals will begin showing signs of damage within a few hours or days after a freeze. However, the more woody shrubs often don't show the extent of injury for several weeks.

Pruning that is done too soon (like now) almost guarantees that cuts will be made at the wrong place on stems. If cuts are made above the point where branches were killed they will require pruning again later in the season. On the other hand, if pruned excessively, too much live stem tissue is removed, resulting in weakened plants.

A second reason for avoiding heavy pruning now is because pruning typically stimulates new shoot growth. As we know, our freezes are frequently followed by a warming period. This warmer weather can stimulate new growth. And, as gardeners, stimulated shrub growth is exactly what we don't want during mid-winter.

Most pruning jobs to remove cold damaged branches should wait until late winter. In general, around the last part of February is normally a good time for this kind of pruning.

Q: Now that my trees have lost their leaves, I've noticed a gray fungus on the trunk and branches. I think that's why my tree looked bad this year. What can I spray to get rid of the fungus?

A: What you are describing is known as a "lichen" (like-in). Lichens are unique organisms but they are NOT plant pathogens. They are frequently misidentified as disease-causing agents. Lichens are epiphytes. Epiphytes are plants which grow above the ground surface, using other plants or objects for support. They are not rooted in the soil nor are they parasitic (they do not directly harm the other plant). By growing on other plants, the epiphytes can reach positions where the light is better or where they can avoid competition for light.



Lichens accumulate on branches after the leaf canopy has thinned. Increased lichens on trees and shrubs should be viewed as an indication that the plant is under stress.

So, if lichens only grow heavily on weakened shrubs, the logical cure is to help plants begin growing better. There may be several reasons for your tree's decline and it often requires a bit of detective work to learn why a group of plants are ailing and then provide cultural practices that return them to health.

January Tips

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- Irish potatoes can be started from January through March by planting seed pieces 3 to 4 inches deep in rows. Always purchase certified seed potatoes.

Lawns

- Check soil moisture during winter and water as needed.



Visit the Santa Rosa County Extension Office Gardens in Milton (6263 Dogwood Drive) to see a demonstration of winter vegetables.



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